



A Summary of Graduation Requirements for Virginia Public Schools July, 2003

This handout is only a summary of information contained in the various documents referenced below and is not an official technical assistance document from the Virginia Department of Education. Users should reference the original documents in helping students make decisions about their graduation options.

Table of Contents

Reference Documents	1	Transfers to a Virginia Public School – Advanced	
Effective Date for Graduation Requirements	1	Studies Diploma Verified Credit Requirements	5
Standard and Verified Credits	2	Modified Standard Diploma	6
Ways to Verify a Credit	2	Modified Standard Diploma Credit and Course	
End-of-Course SOL Tests Available for Verified		Requirements	6
Credit	2	Approved Courses for the Modified Standard	
Substitute Assessments.....	2	Diploma.....	6
Student-Selected Tests	2	Other Diplomas and Certificates	7
Standard Diploma Credit Requirements.....	3	Additional Local Graduation Requirements.....	7
Standard Diploma Course Requirements.....	3	Electives (Sequential Electives, Fine/Practical Art,	
Advanced Studies Diploma Credit Requirements.....	4	Foreign Language)	7
Advanced Studies Diploma Course Requirements.....	4	Diploma Seal Options.....	8
Approved Courses for the Standard and Advanced		Secondary School Transcripts.....	8
Studies Diplomas	5	For Further Information.....	9
Transfers to a Virginia Public School – Standard			
Diploma Verified Credit Requirements.....	5		

Reference Documents

- Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia - September 28, 2000 (Standards of Accreditation - SOA) - <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Accountability/soa.html>
- Guidelines Governing Certain Provisions of the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia - November 30, 2000 - <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Accountability/SOAguidelines.pdf>
- Superintendent's Memoranda – <http://www.pen.k12.va.us> - Then, click on "Superintendent's Memos" under the Superintendent's column on the left.
- The School Administrator's Handbook of Course Codes, Position Codes, and Licensure Codes - July 2000

Effective Date for Graduation Requirements (8 VAC 20-131-50.A)

- Graduation requirements are those in effect when that student entered the ninth grade for the first time.
- Standard and verified credits may be awarded for high school courses successfully completed prior to the ninth grade if they meet SOL content requirements or are equivalent in content and academic rigor as those courses offered at the secondary level.

Standard and Verified Credits (8 VAC 20-131-110.A and B)

- A standard credit is based on a minimum of 140 clock hours of instruction and successful completion of the requirements of the course.

- A verified credit is based on a minimum of 140 clock hours of instruction; successful completion of the requirements of the course; and achievement of a passing score on the end-of-course SOL test or additional test for that course as approved by the Board of Education.
- On July 25, 2002, the Board adopted guidelines for local school boards to follow in awarding a verified credit toward a Standard Diploma to students who entered the ninth grade in 2000-01, 2001-02, and 2002-03, and who have passed a course with an associated SOL test, but failed the associated test. These guidelines apply to science and history and social science only and may be accessed at the Department of Education's Superintendent's Memoranda Web site at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/suptsmemos/2002/adm052a.pdf>.

Ways to Verify a Credit (8 VAC 20-131-110.B)

- End-of-Course SOL Tests
- Substitute Assessments
- Student-Selected Tests and Certain Professional and Industry Certifications and Licenses

End-of-Course Standards of Learning Tests Available for Verified Credit

- English 11: Reading/Literature/Research; Writing
- Mathematics: Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II
- Science: Earth Science, Biology, Chemistry
- History and Social Science: World History and Geography Part I, World History and Geography Part II, World Geography, Virginia and United States History

Substitute Assessments

- The Board has approved additional tests that enable students to earn verified units of credit. (8 VAC 20-131-110.B)
 - Superintendent's Memorandum, Informational, No. 79, June 7, 2002 - <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/suptsmemos/2002/inf079a.pdf>
 - Attachment A – contains the complete list
 - Form to nominate additional tests - Superintendent's Memorandum, Informational, No. 73, May 11, 2001, Attachment A - <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/suptsmemos/2001/inf073b.pdf>
- Students shall be counseled annually regarding the options for using substitute tests for earning verified credits . . . and the consequences of failing to fulfill the obligation to complete the requirements for verified units of credit. (8 VAC 20-131-50.L)

Student-Selected Tests

- The student-selected test(s) may come from (a) any end-of-course SOL test that is not already satisfying a required verified credit or (b) tests in computer science, technology, or other areas as prescribed by the Board. (8 VAC 20-131-50.B)
- The Board has approved a number of career and technical education certification and licensure exams that may also be used to satisfy student-selected verified credits. The complete list of approved substitute assessments and student-selected tests is available in Attachment A to Superintendent's Memorandum, Informational, No. 79, June 7, 2002.
- On June 26, 2002, the Board adopted guidelines for school divisions to follow in awarding more than one verified credit for certain career and technical education certification and licensure exams. These guidelines were announced on the Department of Education's Superintendent's Memoranda Web site at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/suptsmemos/2002/adm045.html>
- On June 25, 2003, the Board approved 69 additional industry certifications that can be used to satisfy student-selected verified credits. The complete list of approved certification and licensure exams can be found as Attachment A to Superintendent's Memorandum, Informational, No.113, July 11, 2003.

Standard Diploma Standard and Verified *Credit* Requirements (8 VAC 20-131-50.B)

Transitional Requirements

➔ *Graduation requirements are those in effect when that student entered the ninth grade for the first time, regardless of the year the student graduates.*

Ninth Graders in:	If Student Graduates in Four Years:	Must earn # Standard Credits	Must earn # Verified Credits
1997-1998	2001	21	Must pass LPT; 0 verified credits
1998-1999	2002	22	Must pass LPT; 0 verified credits
1999-2000	2003	22 Must include 2 sequential electives*	Must pass LPT; 0 verified credits
2000-2001	2004	22	6 verified credits: 2 English;
2001-2002	2005	Must include 2 sequential electives*	4 student-selected
2002-2003	2006		
2003-2004 and beyond	2007 and beyond	22 Must include 2 sequential electives*	6 verified credits: 2 English; 1 mathematics; 1 science; 1 history/ social science; 1 student-selected

*Required for graduates in 2003 and beyond

Standard Diploma *Course* Requirements (8 VAC 20-131-50.B)

Discipline Area	Standard Credits – Effective with ninth graders in 1998-99	Verified Credits – Effective for Ninth Graders in . . .	
		2000-01 through 2000-03	2003-04 and beyond
English	4	2	2
Mathematics ¹	3		1
Laboratory Science ²	3		1
History and Social Sciences ³	3		1
Health and Physical Education	2		
Fine Arts or Practical Arts	1		
Electives ⁴	6		
Student Selected Test ⁵		4	1
Total	22	6	6

¹ Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall be at or above the level of algebra and shall include at least two course selections from among: Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, or other mathematics courses above the level of algebra and geometry. The Board may approve additional courses to satisfy this requirement.

² Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include course selections from at least two different science disciplines: earth sciences, biology, chemistry, or physics. The Board may approve additional courses to satisfy this requirement.

³ Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include U.S. and Virginia History, U.S. and Virginia Government, and one world history/geography course. Courses which satisfy the world history/geography requirement are: (i) World History, (ii) World Geography, (iii) World History and Geography Part I, (iv) World History and Geography, or (v) a semester course of World History Part I and a semester course of World Geography. The Board may approve additional courses to satisfy this requirement.

⁴ Beginning with the graduating class of 2003, courses to satisfy this requirement shall include at least two sequential electives as required by the Standards of Quality.

⁵ A student may utilize additional tests for earning verified credit in computer science, technology, or other areas as prescribed by the Board in 8 VAC 20-131-110.B.

Advanced Studies Diploma Standard and Verified *Credit* Requirements (8 VAC 20-131-50.C)

Transitional Requirements

➔ *Graduation requirements are those in effect when that student entered the ninth grade for the first time, regardless of the year the student graduates.*

Ninth Graders in:	If Student Graduates in Four Years:	Must earn # Standard Credits	Must earn # Verified Credits
1997-1998	2001	23	Must pass LPT; 0 verified credits
1998-1999 1999-2000	2002 2003	24	Must pass LPT; 0 verified credits
2000-2001 and beyond	2004 and beyond	24	9 verified credits: 2 English; 2 mathematics; 2 science; 2 history/social science; 1 student-selected

Advanced Studies Diploma *Course* Requirements (8 VAC 20-131-50.C)

Discipline Area	Standard Credits – Effective with ninth graders in 1998-99	Verified Credits – Effective with ninth graders in 2000-01
English	4	2
Mathematics ¹	4	2
Laboratory Science ²	4	2
History and Social Sciences ³	4	2
Foreign Languages ⁴	3	
Health and Physical Education	2	
Fine Arts or Practical Arts	1	
Electives	2	
Student Selected Test ⁵		1
Total	24	9

¹ Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall be at or above the level of algebra and shall include at least three different course selections from among: Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, or other mathematics courses above the level of Algebra II. The Board may approve additional courses to satisfy this requirement.

² Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include course selections from at least three different science disciplines from among: earth sciences, biology, chemistry, or physics or completion of the sequence of science courses required for the International Baccalaureate Diploma. The Board may approve additional courses to satisfy this requirement.

³ Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include U.S. and Virginia History, U.S. and Virginia Government, and two world history/geography courses. Acceptable courses to satisfy the world history/geography requirements include: (i) World History and World Geography; (ii) World History and Geography Part I, and World History and Geography Part II; or (iii) a semester course of World Geography, a semester course of World History Part I, and a year-long course of World History Part II. The Board may approve additional courses to satisfy this requirement.

⁴ Three years of one language or two years each of two languages.

⁵ A student may utilize additional assessments for earning verified credit in computer science, technology, or other areas as prescribed by the Board in 8 VAC 20-131-110.B.

Approved Courses for the Standard and Advanced Studies Diplomas

A list of courses that satisfy the Standard and Advanced Studies Diploma requirements may be found in *The School Administrator's Handbook of Course Codes, Position Codes, and Licensure Codes* - July 2000 (Beginning on page 49)

- For copies call the Office of Secondary Instructional Services at 804-225-2880
- The list is also on the Internet at: <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/webcrses.html>

First-time Transfers to a Virginia Public School - Standard Diploma Verified Credit Requirements (8 VAC 20-131-60.F.1 and G)

Questions related to transfer requirements may be addressed to Ed Holstrom, eholstro@mail.vak12ed.edu, 804-225-3122.

Beginning = First 20 hours of instruction		During = After the first 20 hours of instruction	
Students transferring into a Virginia public school for the first time	Must Earn	Ninth Graders in 2000-01, 2001-02, 2002-03	Ninth Graders in 2003-04 and beyond
During 9 th Grade Beginning of 10 th Grade	6 Verified Credits		
	English Mathematics Science History and Social Science Student Selected	2 4	2 1 1 1 1
During 10 th Grade Beginning of 11 th Grade	4 Verified Credits		
	English Mathematics Science History and Social Science Student Selected	1 3	1 1 1 1
During 11 th Grade Beginning of 12 th Grade	2 Verified Credits		
	English Student Selected	1 1	1 1
During 12 th Grade	Students should be given every opportunity to earn a diploma; if this is not possible, arrange to have the previous school award the diploma; or seek a waiver of the verified credit requirement from the DOE.		

First-time Transfers to a Virginia Public School - Advanced Studies Diploma Verified Credit Requirements (8 VAC 20-131-60.F.2 and G)

Beginning = First 20 hours of instruction		During = After the first 20 hours of instruction	
Students transferring into a Virginia public school for the first time	Must Earn	Ninth Graders in 2000-01 and beyond	
During 9 th Grade Beginning of 10 th Grade	9 Verified Credits		
	English Mathematics Science History and Social Science Student Selected	2 2 2 2 1	
During 10 th Grade Beginning of 11 th Grade	6 Verified Credits		
	English Mathematics Science History and Social Science Student Selected	2 1 1 1 1	
During 11 th Grade Beginning of 12 th Grade	4 Verified Credits		
	English Student Selected	1 3	
During 12 th Grade	Students should be given every opportunity to earn a diploma; if this is not possible, arrange to have the previous school award the diploma; or seek a waiver of the verified credit requirement from the DOE.		

Superintendent's Memorandum, Interpretive, No. 2, December 20, 2002 provides further clarification for applying the criteria for transfer regulations.

Modified Standard Diploma (8 VAC 20-131-50.D)

- Intended for certain students at the secondary level who have a disability and are unlikely to meet the credit requirements for a Standard Diploma
- Eligibility and participation in the program determined by the student's IEP team and the student, when appropriate
- Decisions of eligibility and participation may be made at any point *after* the student's eighth- grade year
- Must have written consent from parent/guardian for a student to choose this diploma program
- The student must:
 - be allowed to pursue a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma at any time throughout his or her high school career
 - not be excluded from courses and tests required to earn a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma
 - pass literacy and numeracy competency assessments as prescribed by the Board
 - For students who entered the ninth grade prior to 2000-01, the literacy and numeracy competency assessments will be the reading and mathematics subtests of the LPT
 - For students who entered the ninth grade in 2000-01 and beyond, the literacy and numeracy competency assessments will be the eighth-grade English Reading/Literature/Research SOL test and the eighth-grade Mathematics SOL test (Board action – November 30, 2000)
 - The Board has approved the use of end-of-course assessments as substitute assessments for the literacy and numeracy competency requirement. In addition, students pursuing the Modified Standard Diploma shall have opportunities for expedited retest on the on the 8th grade tests. For complete information, refer to Superintendent's Memorandum, Informational, No. 30, March 7, 2003.

Modified Standard Diploma Credit and Course Requirements (8 VAC 131-50.D.5)

Discipline	Standard Credits
English	4
Mathematics ¹	3
Science ²	2
History and Social Science ³	2
Health and Physical Education	2
Fine or Practical Arts	1
Electives ⁴	6
Total	20

¹ Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include content from among applications of algebra, geometry, personal finance, and statistics in courses that have been approved by the Board.

² Courses complete shall include content from at least two of the following: applications of earth science, biology, chemistry, or physics in courses approved by the Board.

³ Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include one unit of credit in U.S. and Virginia History and one unit of credit in U.S. and Virginia Government in courses approved by the Board.

⁴ Beginning with the graduating class of 2003, courses to satisfy this requirement shall include a least two sequential electives in the same manner required for the Standard Diploma.

Approved Courses for the Modified Standard Diploma

The complete list may be found in Attachment A to Superintendent's Memorandum, Administrative, No. 63, December 15, 2000.

Other Diplomas and Certificates (8 VAC 20-131-50.E, F, and G)

- **Special Diploma** – Available to students with disabilities who complete the requirements of their IEP and who do not meet the requirements for other diplomas.
- **Certificate of Program Completion** – Available to students who complete prescribed programs of studies defined by a local school board but who do not qualify for diplomas.
- **General Education Development Certificates (GED)** – Refer to *Regulations Governing General Education Development Certificates* (8 VAC 20-360-10, et. seq.)
- **General Achievement Diploma** – Available to students who meet the criteria set by the Board of Education. Refer to Superintendent's Memorandum, Informational, No. 123 found at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/suptsmemos/2003/inf123.html>.

Additional Local Graduation Requirements (8 VAC 20-131-50.A and 8 VAC 20-131-60.H)

- Local school boards may request and receive permission from the Board of Education to prescribe additional requirements for graduation. Additional requirements that were approved by the Board of Education prior to June 30, 1997, have been grandfathered indefinitely and can remain in effect until a local school board seeks to amend these requirements or the Board of Education takes further action. (November 30, 2000 Guidelines – see “Reference Documents” above)
- Local school divisions may not deny a Standard, Advanced Studies, or Modified Standard Diploma to any *transfer* student who has met the requirements for these diplomas if the student can meet the requirements only by taking a heavier than normal course load in any semester, by taking summer school, or by taking courses after the time when he otherwise would have graduated.
- Technical Assistance Document on Local Graduation Requirements - June 25, 1998
<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Accountability/gradguidance.pdf>

Electives

- **Sequential Electives**
 - Beginning with the graduating class of 2003, at least two sequential electives are required for the Standard and Modified Standard Diplomas.
Superintendent's Memorandum, Interpretive, No. 3, May 25, 2001
 - Guidelines Governing Sequential Electives - Approved by the Board on February 5, 2002 – Attachment A to Superintendent's Memorandum, Interpretive, No. 1, March 8, 2002.
 - Sequential electives may be in any discipline as long as the courses are not specifically required for graduation.
 - Courses used to satisfy the one unit of credit in a fine or practical art may be used to partially satisfy this requirement.
 - For career and technical education electives, check with the Department of Education.
 - An exploratory course followed by an introductory course may not be used to satisfy the requirement.
 - An introductory course followed by another level of the same course of study may be used.
 - Sequential electives do not have to be taken in consecutive years.
- **Fine or Practical Art** - The Standard, Advanced Studies, and Modified Standard Diplomas each contain a requirement for one standard unit of credit in a fine or practical art. The Standards of Accreditation do not require that courses used to satisfy the requirement of a fine or practical art be approved by the board. Therefore, local school officials should use their own judgment in determining which courses students take to satisfy the requirement of a unit of credit in fine or practical arts for the Standard, Advanced Studies, and Modified Standard Diplomas.
- **Foreign Language** - The Advanced Studies Diploma contains a requirement for either three years of one foreign language or two years of two languages. In March 1998, the Board of Education approved the provision of three years of instruction in American Sign Language (ASL) for foreign language credit toward an Advanced Studies

Diploma; other foreign languages will satisfy this requirement as well. Details of this action are available in Superintendent's Memorandum, Interpretive, No. 1, June 12, 1998 (<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/suptsmemos/1998/int001.html>).

Diploma Seal Options (8 VAC 20-131-50.I)

- Superintendent's Memorandum, Administrative, No. 13, March 15, 2002 – Attachment A contains an order form for diploma seals
- To order diploma seals, contact: Patricia Hicks - phicks@mail.vak12ed.edu
- **Local Seals**
 - Local school boards may define criteria for local seals or awards for exceptional academic, career and technical, citizenship, or other exemplary performance.
- **Board of Education Seal**
 - Complete the requirements for a Standard Diploma with an average grade of “A”
 - Students who entered the 9th grade prior to 2000-01 will be allowed to earn the Board of Education Seal under the requirements in effect when they entered the 9th grade: an average grade of “B” (November 30, 2000 Guidelines – see “Reference Documents” above)
- **Governor's Seal**
 - Complete the requirements for an Advanced Studies Diploma with an average grade of “B” or better AND
 - Successfully complete at least one AP or IB or college-level course for credit
- **Career and Technical Education Seal**
 - Earn a Standard Diploma or an Advanced Studies Diploma AND
 - One of the following:
 - Complete a prescribed sequence of courses in a career and technical education concentration or specialization and maintain a “B” or better average in those courses OR
 - Pass an examination in a career and technical education concentration or specialization that confers certification from a recognized industry, trade, or professional association OR
 - Acquire a professional license in that career and technical education field from the Commonwealth of Virginia
- **Seal of Advanced Mathematics and Technology**
 - Earn a Standard Diploma or an Advanced Studies Diploma AND
 - Satisfy all the mathematics requirements for the Advanced Studies Diploma (four units of credit including Algebra II; two verified units of credit) with at least a “B” average AND
 - One of the following:
 - Pass an examination in a career and technical education concentration or specialization that confers certification from a recognized industry, trade, or professional association OR
 - Acquire a professional license in that career and technical education field from the Commonwealth of Virginia OR
 - Pass an examination approved by the Board that confers college-level credit in a technology or computer science area
- Lists of trade, industry, and professional licenses and certifications that satisfy the requirements for the Career and Technical Education Seal and the Seal of Advanced Mathematics and Technology are on the Internet at: <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/CTE>; Click on “*Seals of Achievement*”
- **Excellence in Civics Education**
 - Earn a Standard or an Advanced Studies Diploma AND
 - Complete Virginia and United States History and Virginia and United States Government courses with a grade of “B” or higher; AND

- Complete 50 hours of voluntary participation in community service or extracurricular activities. Activities that would count include:
 - a) Volunteering for a charitable or religious organization that provides services to the poor, sick or less fortunate
 - b) Participating in Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts or similar youth organizations
 - c) Participating in JROTC
 - d) Participating in political campaigns or government internships, or Boys State, Girls State, or Model General Assembly
 - e) Participating in school –sponsored extracurricular activities that have a civics focus.

Any student who enlists in the United States military prior to graduation will be deemed to have met this community service requirement.

AND

- Have good attendance and no disciplinary infractions as determined by local school board policies.

Secondary School Transcripts

- Recent revisions to *Secondary School Transcript Regulations* and transcript prototypes - Superintendent's Memorandum, Informational, No. 10, January 18, 2002

For further information about specific academic graduation requirements in Virginia public schools, please contact:

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For further information about specific career and technical education graduation related requirements in Virginia public schools, please contact:

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